



Most believers are familiar with the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Last week I learned that it was Hudson Taylor who most popularized the phrase “Great Commission” with quotes like this one. “The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed.”

I completely agree with Taylor’s assessment of the Great Commission. But what is disciple making anyway? If I’m commanded to do, then someone needs to tell me what I’m supposed to do. I’m glad you asked, because that’s what we’re going to do for the next six weeks in this series of making disciples. Let’s start with Matthew 28.

*16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

I don’t have time to spend the whole morning on this passage, but I want to pull out some observations.

**1. Disciple making is grounded in Jesus’ authority.**

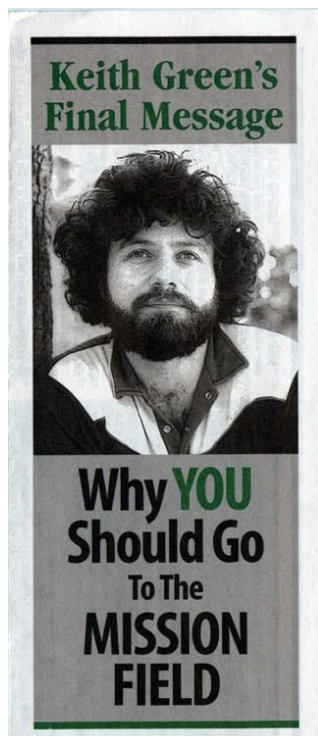
*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.* Notice that the command to make disciples comes after a “therefore.” Because all authority was given to Jesus, therefore we are to make disciples. This is Jesus’ church, his authority, his power. We just get the privilege to participate in it with him.

**2. Disciple making is commanded by Jesus.**

The command in verse 19 is not to “go” but to “make disciples.” The idea is that as you go, make disciples along the way. Make disciples is the core of the command. Many missionaries have used this verse to confirm their call to the mission field. And it makes sense since the call is to

make disciples of all nations. And you obviously have to “go” somewhere in order for this charge to be fulfilled. There have to be missionaries in order to make disciples of all nations. But that does not mean that everyone has to go. The core command is not ‘to go’ but ‘to make disciples’.

Here’s where I disagree with Keith Green. Keith Green and two of his children were killed in a plane crash in 1982. In his short 28 years of life, Keith had a great impact upon the body of Christ through his music and discipleship ministry. I read several of his discipleship tracts in the first two years after I was saved. One of his most popular tracts was this one—“Why YOU Should Go to the Mission Field.” It is called Keith Green’s final message for good reason. In the introduction to the tract, Keith’s wife Melody Green wrote: “It was completed only a few days before Keith and two of our children, Josiah and Bethany, went home to be with Jesus in a fatal plane crash.” In Part 2 of the tract, Keith listed the most commonly heard excuses for not going to the mission field.



1) "But I'm not called."

You don't know how many people I've met who have said to me "Keith, I agree that more people need to go to the mission field, but I've never heard God tell me to go."

Well, the truth is that God has already told you to go in His Word. In fact, He commands you to go... "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15) That's right... **YOU ARE CALLED!**

In fact, if you don't go, you need a specific calling from God to stay home. Has God definitely told you not to "go" somewhere outside your country to preach the Gospel? If He hasn't, then you'd better start praying **WHERE** to go, instead of **IF** you should go - for again, you're already called!

Since America has only about 5% of the world's population, then only about 5% of the believers would really be called to stay in this country as a witness while the rest of us should go into the parts of the world where there are almost 0% believers.<sup>1</sup>

In an otherwise helpful tract on missions, I disagree with this point. Not everyone is called to cross-cultural ministry, which is what missions is all about. Making disciples in the context of another culture and another language is really hard. If you're not sure, just ask the Green family who in September returned from Slovenia after twenty years there—and Don was a missionary for ten years prior to that. They had a long, fruitful ministry, not just because of their gifting, but primarily because of their character and their calling. God clearly called them to cross-cultural disciple making.

“So Maurer, what’s wrong with you? Are you against missions or something?” Most definitely not. I am just making the point that not everyone is called to cross-cultural

disciplemaking, but every believer is called to make disciples. It is a command from our Lord and King, Jesus.

### 3. Disciple making is simple, but it isn't easy.

The core command is to make disciples and the two basic parts of making disciples is *baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*. That's all there is to it. The baptizing part represent new believers getting saved and the teaching command is the Christian growth part. In other words, proclaim the gospel so that people are saved and teach them to obey and follow Christ. It's not that complicated. So why isn't everyone doing it? Why isn't every church constantly pumping out disciple makers? Because it isn't easy. This is hard work that requires a thorough understanding and deep commitment to Jesus' command. It's simple, but it is not easy.

### 4. Disciple making is the purpose of the church.



When I was a kid, these were my favorite Christmas cookies that my mom made. I would usually eat the Hershey's kiss first and then the cookie. A few years ago our family took a trip out east to Washington DC and Philadelphia. Naturally, we had to stop in to tour the Hershey's candy factory. Do you have any idea how many Hershey kisses are made each day? 60 million Hershey kisses

made every single day in their two factories!<sup>2</sup> That's 700 chocolate kisses per second, all day long every day. When you take the tour you see this sign which has a running tally throughout the day.



So now all you can think about for the rest of the morning is chocolate! No, I have another reason for sharing this interesting statistic. What if Hershey's suddenly stopped production in their candy factories and announced that they had decided to focus on a new clothing line. They plan to go head to head in competition with Levi's and Carhart. What would you think about such a decision? Beside the fact that you would never again get to have a chocolate kiss melt in your mouth, you'd think they were insane! First of all, they are bound to fail in this new business venture but more importantly, they are in the candy business! They sold \$7.4 billion worth of candy last year so why would they try to do something completely different? They are a candy manufacturer and we would be shocked if they stopped making candy after doing it for 122 years.

In the same way, we should be just as shocked if churches are not making disciples. The fact that churches are supposed be making disciples should be just as obvious as Hershey's making candy. It's what we are supposed to do. Now I certainly do not mean to imply that churches are like factories which pump out disciples on a robotic assembly line. Disciple making is extremely

personal and relationship driven. It's not an assembly line but it is our end product, our goal. So it is right to ask whether we are making disciples or not.

### **5. Disciple making is for ALL believers.**

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.* There's a simple question we need to ask about this verse. Did Jesus intend this verse only for the eleven disciples? Were they and they alone tasked with making disciples of all nations? It doesn't seem very likely, does it? Especially since most of them were martyred before the gospel reached even the Roman world. Therefore, what does that mean for you and me? It means that this verse applies to all believers. Every believer is to be a disciple maker. This is why Hudson Taylor was absolutely right when he said, "The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed."

Some might be thinking, "Well I don't even know what a disciple is supposed to do. What does that look like?" Unless you are a fairly new believer, most Christians have a pretty good idea of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus but you may have a less clear idea of what it means to be a disciplemaker.

### **6. Disciple making is essential in order to be a maturing disciple.**

Please notice a vital distinction. Hudson Taylor and more importantly Jesus are both saying that all believers are to be disciple makers. That's a notch up from merely being a disciple. So put simply, what this means is that the goal is not merely to be a good follower of Christ but that we must help everyone else to become a good follower of Christ. In fact, the very definition of a disciple includes being a disciple maker. You cannot be a mature disciple of Christ unless you are also helping other believers become more mature in their walk with the Lord. This will become more clear when we look at the full description of what it means to be a disciple.

I have been working out at the Fitness Center at the Landmark for almost sixteen years. It was super convenient when the church office used to be there. I used to be able to take about five steps and be in the fitness center. That was pretty nice. Since the center is open 24/7, people work out at all hours of the day and quite often, you're the only one in there. This has lent itself to people becoming very sloppy. Sometimes I'll go in there and find weights and dumbbells strewn all over the workout area. There might be a deadlift bar sitting in the middle of the room with 250 pounds on it. Weights are left on the bars, dumbbells are lying around where you are constantly walking over them or tripping over them. This is despite the fact that there are large signs asking everyone to put away the weights when they are finished.

This really drives me crazy because I have to clean up everyone else's mess. It has to be done because you can't have a good workout otherwise. I am tempted to write on the bottom of those signs reminding people to put away the weights when they are finished—"Yes, that means you, you lazy person!" Now the people who do that, what are they thinking? That's the whole problem, isn't it? They aren't thinking and if they are thinking, they are thinking only of themselves and their own convenience. From their perspective, if they leave the weights lying everywhere, the next time they work out everything is cleaned up. It's a miracle! It's not unlike what kids (and some husbands) experience around the house, right? They leave dirty clothes on the floor and dirty dishes on the table and somehow, and while they are snuggled in their beds, little elves come down the chimney and clean their clothes and put them in the dresser and wash

the dishes and stack them neatly in the cupboard. From their perspective, it's all quite miraculous!

So in both examples, the job will get done regardless of who does the work. In the same way, disciple making will get done regardless of who does the work. But the work of making disciples is not just for pastors and missionaries. Not only are all believers commanded to make disciples, but disciple making is an essential part of discipleship. You cannot mature as a disciple of Christ unless you are also engaged in making disciples at some level.

Now it might sound like I am saying this just to put a big guilt trip on you. There are at least two reasons I can think of that not you are not currently making disciples.

1. You are lazy and disobedient.

Some of you know all of what I am saying but you are too lazy or too disobedient to get engaged in making disciples. Does that offend you? Good! Some of you need to be offended. Some of you need to be woken up from your spiritual slumber. But before you start throwing stones at me, please listen to the next reason why we are not making disciples.

2. You have never learned this before.

Now whose fault is this? Well it could be your fault for not really caring but I am willing to carry the lion's share of the blame. If you have been in this church for a while and attend regularly and you know very little about making disciples, then that is my fault, not yours. I'm not disappointed in our disciple making efforts. I'm just not satisfied. And that in itself is an important distinction. It's similar to one of my life values to strive to be content but not complacent. We should be content with our lives, with all that God has given us. A lack of contentment is at the core of so many issues in our lives. We should be content, but not complacent. Complacency is a type of laziness. We are lulled into complacency. So we can be content or satisfied with our disciple making efforts but we must never become complacent. So if you've never learned what it means to be a disciple or how to make disciples, please try to make all of the messages in this series.

But the bottom line is that unless you are making disciples, you cannot be a maturing disciple. As we will see in coming weeks, the definition of a mature disciple includes making disciples.

- 7. Disciple making is impossible outside of the church.**

Immediately some of you are thinking, "Now hang on. I been involved in making disciples that wasn't part of a local church." Good, you probably have. By saying that disciple making is impossible outside of the church, I am primarily referring to the universal church but secondarily to the local church. The local church, at least a reasonably healthy church, is always the best expression of the universal church.

Another way of saying this is that you cannot make disciple by yourself. You can no more make disciples by yourself and more than you can play a game of football by yourself. Disciple making is a corporate endeavor with individual expression. Relationships are the foundation of all disciplinemaking.

As I read a section of Ephesians 4, listen to see if this is something you can do by yourself.

*“until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:13,15-16).*

Did you catch the corporate language, the terms that have to do with unity and fellowship?

“until we all reach unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.”

“we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ”

“from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped”

“when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love”

All of this just screams the fact that Christian maturity cannot happen all by yourself. There are some things you can do. There are things that we do as individuals. I almost always read my Bible by myself. Most of my praying is done by myself. I largely fight temptation by myself. These are individual expressions of my faith but at its core, my growth as a believer happens in community with other believers. The fact is that we need each other.

We falsely believe that Christian growth is an individual process. I have heard this fifty times in my life: “I can be a Christian and not go to church.” That’s true. I would never dispute this fact. You can be a Christian and not go to church but you cannot be a maturing believer and not be engaged with other believers in close community.

Look what happens when you put the last 2 principles together.

- Disciple making is essential in order to be a maturing disciple.
- Disciple making is impossible outside of the church.

Therefore, you cannot be a maturing disciple outside of the church. And since a healthy local church is the best expression of the universal church, most disciple making needs to take place within the local church.

By way of application, I am not going to ask you to obey the Great Commission—at least not yet. I don’t want you to commit to something that you don’t understand. I don’t want you to get all revved up and commit to something out of emotionalism. We’ll get to that in time.

Here’s what I would ask you to. Would you please pray about your understanding and possible role in making disciples? I’m just asking you to pray about it even one time before next week.

Second, please consider attending LEAD this Thursday. We are creating LEAD to be the core of all disciplinemaking at church. Eventually, if you want to be engaged in making disciples at Grace, you will need to be attending LEAD as much as possible. This week we will be sharing our personal testimonies.

**Rich Maurer**  
**January 8, 2017**

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.lastdaysministries.org/Articles/1000008651/Last\\_Days\\_Ministries/LDM/Discipleship\\_Teachings/Keith\\_Green/Why\\_YOU\\_Should.aspx](http://www.lastdaysministries.org/Articles/1000008651/Last_Days_Ministries/LDM/Discipleship_Teachings/Keith_Green/Why_YOU_Should.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hershey's\\_Kisses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hershey's_Kisses)